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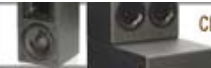
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APC AV Model S15BLK Power Conditioner with Battery Backup:



American Power Conversion is a well established company that makes a plethora of products related to power protection which are used world wide and not just in the audio/video realm. I won't try to list all of the products made by APC but believe me they have years of experience at making products that people trust and rely on.

In speaking to one of their production people it was very obvious to me that APC AV is very proud of the design/implementation of the Model S15. After spending some time with it I am here to tell you that they should be. The S15 is a power conditioner/surge protector with a battery backup that provides automatic voltage regulation, and has a continuous rated watt capacity of 900 watts. The unit comes with a 2 year warranty that includes the battery and has an msrp of \$1500.

The S15 comes in either silver or black finishes with the BLK designation coinciding with the black model. The unit is rather large and hefty weighing in at just over 60 lbs. For those who plan to shelf mount it you will want to ensure that you have plenty of depth as the unit is just over 18 inches deep.

The unit came securely packed from APC and contained the S15 (with battery pack installed but disconnected), front display panel/bezel (separately packaged), 10 foot AC power cord, 3 coaxial patch cables, 1 DC trigger cable, PowerChute Personal Edition Software (more on that later), USB interface cable, 1 telephone patch cable, 1 Ethernet patch cable, 1 complete rack mount kit and owners manual.

Once unpacked, assembly of the S15BLK was straight forward thanks to the concise instructions in the owner's manual. The unit ships with the battery installed but disconnected. Connection was simple and required plugging the battery wire connector into the corresponding input. The front bezel/control panel snapped into place with ease and I was ready to go with set up. I took a moment to marvel at how attractive the S15BLK is. The unit is anodized black and the front panel is striking with its four silver control buttons mounted on either side of the Vacuum Fluorescent Display which is framed in oval silver. There are a series of blue LED's (that are set against a black background) which provide settings information as well as system conditions. The entire control center is set within a larger silver oval at the base of which is the system's power button that glows blue when set to On.

The raised APC logo sits centered atop the control center. On each side of the front bezel are three sets of "ribs" that are used as grips when removing the bezel. A nice touch that adds to the aesthetic appeal of the S15.

The back panel is very busy and contains 12 filtered outlets that are marked device specific and broken down into digital, analog, video and high current outlets all of which provide surge protection, voltage regulation, noise filtering and pure sine wave battery backup power. There are three sets of coaxial/RF connectors, a circuit breaker reset button, system ground screw, a building wiring fault indicator, external battery connector, DC trigger jacks (in/out) Ethernet jacks (in/out), telephone jacks (in and 2 outputs), a Data port (USB) jack, a cooling fan, and input power connector. It would be fair to say that the S15 is fully featured.

I went to work connecting my cable line from the wall to the input on the APC. I was surprised to see that an additional output was included which allowed me to use the APC as a cable line splitter as well (nice). I connected the additional output to the line going to my cable modem. In addition to all my other gear I connected my PC to the S15. I ran the supplied USB and Ethernet cables to the data port and Ethernet port on the APC and my cable modem, wireless router and USB port on my PC.

I powered the S15 up and checked out the Vacuum Fluorescent Display. It is easy to read and appears to be sharper than a normal LCD display. The display as well as the LEDs can be dimmed or turned off altogether (YES!). There is even a screen saver that can be activated via the setup menu to protect the VFD (nice touch). The unit immediately runs a self test to ensure proper operation, which it passed. At that point I pressed the front panel Setup button and began setting the unit up. The S15 is completely configurable and has a multitude of user selectable settings and options. For example, through use of the extensive setup menu users can set a defined delay (0 to 10 seconds) for when the unit provides power to the two rear panel Delayed outlets. This will prevent power on or power off glitches from affecting other equipment connected to the unit. Users can define at what voltage setting the unit's battery backup should intervene on both the high and low voltage end. The default setting for the low end is 100 volts while the default setting on the high end is 134 volts. Users can set the parameters between 90 and 100 volts for low and 134 to 144 volts on the high end. I left the unit set to the default setting as the input voltage in my room never drops below 115 volts even during peak times.

There are three user adjustable Sensitivity settings, Low, Medium, and High. These adjust how the S15 reacts to input voltage waveform distortion and momentary power fluctuations. I tried all three settings and found low to be the best in my room. The high setting resulted in the unit going to battery operation quite a bit especially during when the system was being driven hard. The medium setting was much better which only had the unit switch over to battery power during heavy transient peaks and even then only on occasion. The medium setting would be fine in most if not all cases.

The S15 has several audible alarm settings for notification when the unit detects changes in the input voltage and needs to switch over to battery power, as well as when the unit's battery is running low. In addition the S15 will indicate via the LEDs on the front panel when it is in voltage regulation mode, receiving an overload, running on the battery or the battery is low.

The S15 provides a host of system information that can be accessed using the Status button on the front panel. Users can ascertain the input and output voltage, total system load (both in watts and a percentage based upon total wattage utilized), estimated system run time and battery fuel capacity, current power source (utility or battery power), input and output frequency, firmware version currently installed, model and serial number as

well as the telephone number and internet web address for APC technical support. The S15 will even perform a Runtime Calculation test to calibrate the internal measurements which should result in more accurate runtime estimates. The options run even deeper but you get the idea.

The supplied PowerChute Software allows the system to be monitored and optimized via your personal computer. Furthermore in the event of a power outage the software will protect your operating system and open files by gracefully shutting down the system in the event of an extended power outage. I installed the software on my PC and it immediately found the S15. I was able to run system checks, check current status (battery life, estimated run time etc.), performance (power related events/history), and completely customize the settings on the S15BLK right from my computer screen. Any changes detected by the S15 can be reported on the PC desktop.

I powered everything up without a hitch. A check of the entire system for noise yielded total system silence. A review of both standard and high definition programming through my DVR indicated that the pass through capabilities on the APC is excellent. I experienced similar performance with my cable modem and wireless router. I listened to music in both two channel and high resolution multi-channel varieties and was treated to the same richly detailed and silky smooth sound that I have become accustomed to in my system. I have an Outlaw Audio Model 7700 seven channel amplifier which can be sensitive to ground loops and AC line noise. I inserted the Outlaw into the system and it ran dead quiet in all channels. Running the system at reference levels with movies soundtracks proved no problem for the APC. Either with or without the use of the subwoofer the system sound was crystal clear with subtle detail and brute force Sonics. Using either the B&K or Outlaw amps the system never sounded restrained or anemic. The plane crash sequence from "Flight of the Phoenix" Blu-ray disc sounded superb with plenty of fine articulation and room rattling power extension.

I wanted to test the battery backup capabilities of the S15. The transfer time to battery in the event of a blackout according to APC is 7ms. With the system running at full steam I shut down the circuit breaker to my theater room (yeah I held my breath). The APC never missed a beat as each of the components in the system continued on with no indication that the system was being operated on battery power. The only indication that the unit was running on battery power was the sound of the fan on the S15's rear panel. The fan keeps the unit cool while it is operating on battery power. The S15 outputs a pure 60Hz Sine Wave waveform when operating on the battery. The battery is sealed lead-acid maintenance free which can be typically recharged in 8 hours. The system can run on battery power for 20 minutes at half load (450 watts) or 7 minutes at full load (900 watts). Those times will vary depending on the total system load and the battery charge level/health. The S15 has an input on its rear panel to allow connection of APC SBATT extended battery packs (\$500 each) which can be daisy chained to extend the unit's run time. Most would not have a need to run the system under full load for a prolonged period of time. For those that do the addition of the SBATT external battery packs is a nice option to have.

The APC AV S15BLK is the most industrious, full featured power conditioner I have ever had in my system. It's ease of use, flexibility, extensive setup options and aesthetic appeal are second to none. APC has taken careful steps to ensure that this unit can fulfill the needs required by even the most sophisticated systems. It is an a/v enthusiasts delight in that it can be tailored in a variety of ways to fit each systems needs.

It offers top flight power conditioning/filtration, automatic voltage regulation, and total system protection. A battery backup is highly recommended for those with lamp driven projection systems. The S15BLK's battery backup function performs with great precision and reliability. This all comes at a

price that when compared to the competition places the APC AV S15BLK on my list of highly recommended products.